United Nations DP/2006/33 - DP/FPA/2006/11

Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund

Distr.: General
10 April 2006

Original: English

Annual session 2006
12 to 23 June 2006, Geneva
Item 17 of the provisional agenda
Programming process

Report on the implementation experience of joint programming and joint programmes by UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF since 2004*

Summary

UNDP, UNFPA and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) are committed to joint programming and joint programmes: the number of joint programmes in which our organizations participate increases each year. This collaboration has been facilitated by the introduction of the common country programming process and the issuance of the inter-organization guidance note on joint programming, which together set out a framework for joint programmes. For the first time we have common United Nations Development Group (UNDG) operational tools and programming processes with which to develop and implement joint programmes, resulting in enhanced efficiency, effectiveness and coherence. This report reflects on the experience of the joint programmes that have been implemented or developed within this framework.

We have continued to focus on our respective mandates while participating in joint programmes. The instruments set out in the guidance note on joint programming are designed to ensure that standards of financial accountability and reporting are maintained.

We are learning the operational constraints to joint programmes that prevent greater efficiency and effectiveness and will address these, although solutions to some of the issues identified will require United Nations system-wide measures.

Many of the programmatic limitations of joint programmes are being addressed in the improvements proposed for the United Nations common country programming process. The proposed changes will lead to mainstreaming joint programmes within the country programming process, enabling joint programmes to fulfil their potential of providing an effective, synergistic and efficient United Nations response to developing national capacities to achieve the Millennium agenda.

*This report on the implementation experience of joint programming and joint programmes by UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF since 2004 will be submitted to the UNICEF Executive Board under the symbol E/ICEF/2006/13 and Add.1.

06-30390 (E) 040506

Contents

Chapter		Page
I.	Introduction	3
II.	Background	3
III.	Organizational support for joint programming and joint programmes	5
IV.	What we are learning	6
	A. Achievements	6
	B. Challenges	9
V.	Current status of implementation of joint programmes	12
	A. Implementation experience	12
	B. Trends	12
	C. Options for managing funds	13
	D. Partnerships	14
VI.	Moving forward	14
Annexes		
1.	Implementation of joint programmes by UNDP	16
2.	Implementation of joint programmes by UNFPA	17

Definitions

Joint programming is the collective effort of the United Nations and national partners to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate activities to support countries in their achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other international commitments. It is manifested in the common country assessment (CCA); the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and associated results matrix; the joint strategy meeting with national partners; and UNDAF annual reviews and evaluations. In the common country programming process, in addition to participating in joint programming, the Executive Committee organizations of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) each also prepare a country programme document (CPD), a country programme action plan (CPAP), and associated annual work plans. These documents are not prepared by the specialized organizations.

I. Introduction

1. This document is a response to the decisions of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board (2005/10) and the UNICEF Executive Board (E/ICEF/2005/3), which request that UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF provide a comprehensive report on joint programming and joint programmes as outlined in the UNDG guidance note on joint programming[1] issued in 2004. The decisions call for information on experiences and an analysis of resources allocated to the different options for managing funds for joint programmes, and the resulting benefit in development impact or efficiency gains.

2. The report sets out the efforts made by the organizations to support joint programmes and takes stock of what we are learning of the positive benefits of joint programmes – as well as the challenges presented by the modality and the current limits of its application. It provides an overview of joint programme trends to date and concludes with our view on how we expect joint programmes to evolve in the future as a tool for greater efficiency and effectiveness of United Nations programmes at country level. The relatively recent introduction of the guidance note means that we have limited experience to draw on, so the report is a presentation of our experience; we supplement this with our interpretation of that experience and its expected results. A full evaluation of joint programmes is needed to provide a complete explanation of experience to date.

II. Background

3. Joint programming is the collective effort of the United Nations and national partners to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate activities to support countries in their achievement of the MDGs and other international commitments. Joint programmes are one way in which we expect to implement the actions identified in the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review, 2004 (A/Res/59/250), including "harmonization and simplification measures, with a view to achieving a significant reduction in the administrative and procedural burden on the organizations and their national partners...". In adopting these new ways of working, our fundamental objective remains our focus on national development priorities – in that sense joint programmes are no different from other programme activities.

4. Joint programmes are an outcome of the joint programming process. The guidance note has led to a clearer definition of joint programmes: at least two United Nations partners working with national partners, with common objectives and, most critically, a common work plan and budget. Ideally, the work plan is an annual work plan in the form adopted by the United Nations organizations, funds and programmes, which are bound by the harmonized country programme approval process. Joint programmes are intended to reduce duplication between United Nations organizations, reduce transaction costs and maximize synergies among national partners and the various contributions of United Nations system

[1] Referred to subsequently as 'the guidance note'

organizations. The division of labour among United Nations partners in a joint programme means that attribution issues are similar to those faced in single-organization programmes. The more rigorous definition of joint programmes has the benefit of allowing us to conclude more clearly what is (and what is not) a joint programme, but it masks a great deal of collaborative effort at the country level that does not constitute a joint programme as defined in the guidance note. Joint programmes strive to meet the strategic intent of joint programming.

5. In increasing the effectiveness of joint programmes, our three organizations face similar institutional challenges and are equally concerned that joint programmes should enhance results at the country level, particularly in support of the MDGs and national capacity development. Therefore, through this joint report, our organizations have adopted a collaborative approach in reporting to our respective Executive Boards. However, in terms of organization-specific resource allocations to joint programmes and to different fund management options, each organization will have a different profile. These are indicated in the annexes to this document and posted on the respective websites.

6. This document draws heavily on two sources of data. The first is a series of case studies of 21 joint programmes in 14 countries commissioned by the inter-organization working group on joint programmes to provide information on experience to date in implementing joint programmes. The second is the narrative reporting process of each organization. These data sources are supplemented by Resident Coordinators' reporting to the United Nations Development Group Office (DGO) and feedback from country-level experiences collected through studies by United Nations organizations and others on the common country programming process and on joint programmes[2]. The narrative reporting does not always reflect full financial information on joint programmes as a distinct category of programme. The three organizations are in the process of updating financial management systems so that joint programmes can be specifically tagged. This will make the future extraction of more complete financial data easier, while maintaining its organization-specific nature.

7. In reporting on the impact of joint programmes, we will focus on their role in enhancing results through the increased efficiency and effectiveness and reduced transaction costs that they can bring. We have not yet evaluated the impact of the existing joint programmes on development results, so we cannot yet state that joint programmes lead to better development outcomes than single-organization programmes. A limited number of evaluations of individual joint programmes have been undertaken, but there has not yet been a multi-country evaluation of the approach in comparison to single-organization approaches.

---

[2] Kelly, L. 2006. *Enhancing the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Joint Programmes; lessons learned from a UNDG review*. UNDGO New York.

Klap, A. 2005. *An Assessment of CPAPs and Annual Work Plans for UNDP's Business Needs*, UNDP-BDP, New York.

Salas, M. 2005. *Improving the Quality of Programme Planning Process for results*. Division of Policy and Planning, UNICEF, New York.

Scanteam 2005. *Joint Programming as an Instrument for UN Reform at Country Level*: Pilot study on current achievements by the United Nations operational system.

III. Organizational support for joint programming and joint programmes

8. In 2004, the reports to our Executive Boards of our respective organizations on joint programming and other innovative and collaborative approaches (DP/2004/30, DP/FPA/2004/8 and E/ICEF/2004/10) highlighted several challenges to joint programming and joint programmes, including limited facilitation of joint programmes through the CCA/UNDAF process; donor interest or availability of funds driving joint programmes as opposed to the country programming process; different approaches among organizations to results-based management; and different methodologies applied by organizations to calculate cost recovery rates.

9. It was expected that the introduction of the guidance note in 2004, together with the roll-out of the common country programming process as of 2003, would help overcome these challenges and would maximize opportunities for joint programmes. This was the first time that efforts had been made to ensure that collaborative actions between United Nations organizations and national partners at the country level were linked specifically to the country programming process. Guidance has subsequently been issued on additional aspects of joint programming, including UNDAF review and monitoring and evaluation. The joint programmes implemented in 2005 are thus the first to be developed within the context of a full inter-organization programme cycle at the country level.

10. The UNDG as a whole, and the UNDG Executive Committee organizations in particular, have promoted joint programmes where they add value. Programming manuals and training have been amended to reflect the procedures applicable to joint programmes. In addition to the guidance note, the inter-organization joint programmes working group and the joint programmes focal point in DGO have provided advice and support to United Nations country teams (UNCTs). Within UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, each organization has established support mechanisms at headquarters to advise UNCTs on organization-specific issues. At the country level, coordination of and information on joint programmes are increasingly being centred in the Resident Coordinator's office.

11. A key development was the creation, in 2005, of the joint programmes database on the UNDG website. This database drew initially on data provided by resident coordinators' offices. For this report, the database information has been supplemented and verified through UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF annual reports. It is hoped that additional verification can be provided by the other UNDG organizations to ensure that the database can become a comprehensive source of information on joint programmes. The database is maintained at the country level by the Resident Coordinator's office; DGO, through its support to the UNDG website, ensures that the database reflects the global overview of joint programmes.

12. Due to the inter-organizational nature of joint programmes, the database, when it is fully developed, should provide a comprehensive view of collective joint programme activity which is not captured in organization-specific reporting. It is expected that the database will also support UNCTs by allowing them to identify other joint programmes in their region, and facilitate direct contact between resident

coordinators' offices and UNCTs for learning and technical support on joint programme implementation experience.

13. The agreement between the Executive Committee organizations and the Government of Cape Verde to prepare a common country programme document has taken us a step further in formulating and implementing joint programmes. The Cape Verde common country programme document is operationalized through a common country programme action plan, and associated work plans. Thus, for the Executive Committee organizations, common annual work plans are being implemented; this is a key definition of a joint programme, so there is no separate identification of joint programmes involving more than one United Nations Executive Committee organization – all are joint programmes, with the contribution of each organization outlined in the common annual work plan.

14. The proposals for improving the United Nations common country programming process are informed by the experience of Cape Verde and the implementation of the common country programming process since 2003. The improvements proposed would necessarily lead to a more coherent, strategic identification of joint programme opportunities.

IV. What we are learning

15. We are beginning to see some of the intended benefits of joint programmes, including reduced duplication, reduced transaction costs and increased coherence. We are also starting to be able to identify conditions that facilitate effective joint programmes. Conversely, we are starting to identify more clearly the limits in the application of joint programmes and the operational constraints we face in implementing them.

A. Achievements

16. Our growing experience of joint programmes points to a number of positive experiences and benefits of the approach, including:

(a) *Increasing commitment by UNDG organizations to work together.* Increasing numbers of joint programmes in a broad range of programme areas point to the greater understanding of and commitment to working together by UNCTs and the benefits this can bring. Several case studies note the value of greater understanding of each others' mandates and hence the identification of opportunities for collaboration.

(b) *Reducing duplication.* Features of joint programmes such as joint needs assessments, joint monitoring and evaluation and collaborative decision-making have reduced duplication of activities across United Nations organizations as well as between them and their development partners. HIV/AIDS joint programmes in Armenia and Ukraine promoted enhanced sub-national collaboration and consolidated the preparation of training materials between two United Nations organizations. Reduced duplication of activities by United Nations partners has occurred in Kenya and Yemen as a result of common annual work plans for joint programmes focusing on statistical capacity-building and the MDG-based development of Poverty-Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Joint programmes in

Kazakhstan and Swaziland addressing HIV/AIDS have promoted increased collaboration and reduced duplication of activities at the field level between United Nations organizations and other development partners including the Soros Foundation and the United Nations Foundation.

(c) *Reducing transaction costs.* There is evidence to suggest that transaction costs to governments have been reduced by joint programmes, mainly through reducing meetings and the use of joint review processes. However, since so many joint programmes employ the parallel fund management option, the transaction costs relating to funding and reporting for both national partners and United Nations organizations are unlikely to have been reduced. Where pooled funding is used, transaction costs for governme nt have indeed been reduced: an evaluation of the Eritrea food, nutrition, water and sanitation humanitarian response programme found this to be the case. The transaction costs to United Nations organizations themselves in setting up formal joint programmes need to be considered: there is little evidence that these have been reduced. Such costs could be reduced where joint programmes are rooted in the CCA/UNDAF process, but will not completely disappear and are likely to remain significant for as long as organizations have different financial management and reporting systems.

(d) *Improving the information and knowledge base in countries.* Demographic health surveys in Cambodia, Liberia, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe; the implementation of the DevInfo system for MDG monitoring in Nicaragua, Paraguay and Peru; capacity development of national statistical organizations and other data-related national capacity-building and training for MDG monitoring lend themselves to the joint programme modality. Joint programmes can also reduce overlap in activities such as materials development, training of field workers and cost of field surveys, while ensuring a more complete set of data. United Nations support for data collection ensures internationally standardized methodologies and facilitates international comparability.

(e) *Increasing the coherence of activities for greater effectiveness.* In Eritrea the decision by the Government, UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) to initiate a joint programme rather than the earlier, less formal arrangement provided for assistance on a more 'macro' level. Through the joint food, nutrition, water and sanitation, and humanitarian response programme, the partners are developing a national plan of action for nutrition; strengthening the national surveillance system; and using the surveillance system for targeting general food distribution and supplementary feeding. While the previous arrangement had been limited to enhancing cooperation through awareness of individual work plans and activities, the joint programme approach allowed the organizations to scale up existing services and combine their competencies to assist the Government with national policy formulation in the ministries of health and education. Joint programmes on HIV/AIDS in Armenia and Ukraine were instrumental in bringing together a range of partners, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which had previously been working independently. Such activities benefit the work of all partners through knowledge and experience sharing.

(f) *Maintaining a focus on organization mandates and ensuring transparency and accountability.* Increasing the scope of programmes has been achieved whilst maintaining organizational mandates (see annexes). Joint programmes have the potential to ensure that United Nations mandates are taken fully into consideration

in national development instruments, including the mandates of organizations with a limited funding base. Among the various fund management options, we have developed systems for tracking transfers of funds between organizations when pass-through or pooled mechanisms are used. Once such transfers are made, or if parallel funding is used, organizational reporting and accounting processes apply. These ensure that, at both the organizational and the programme level, we can monitor the use of funds where they are managed by United Nations organizations.

(g) *Reaching particularly marginalized populations.* The combined strengths of a number of partners in programming has succeeded in supporting the rights of groups that have previously been marginalized, such as in Kazakhstan's coordinated programme on healthy lifestyle development, which seeks to establish social and legislative support for populations vulnerable to HIV that had previously been excluded from services and legal protections. In Armenia, the joint programme to promote NGO involvement in anti-retroviral therapy and treatment and care programmes reaches migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers and victims of human trafficking through the combined efforts of a range of national partners and United Nations organizations. A number of joint programmes address the broader human rights agenda, including increasing social inclusion through the participation of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups; human security, including policing and conflict prevention; reintegration; and local governance, decentralization, law and justice.

(h) *Facilitating a swift response to crises.* Joint programmes have been effective in enabling UNCTs and donors alike to respond swiftly to crises that require a joint, multi-disciplinary approach. Examples include the South Asia tsunami in 2004; the earthquake in Pakistan in 2005; and the avian influenza pandemic threat in the same year. UNCTs in Cambodia and Viet Nam have successfully developed joint programmes on avian influenza.

(i) *Leveraging additional resources.* There is evidence that some bilateral donors are encouraged by the joint programme approach and are eager to see it applied. For example, in the programme for development of an MDG-based poverty reduction plan for Yemen, a donor organization expressed its preference that United Nations organizations work together through a joint programme as a condition for its contribution. In Eritrea, donor funding for a programme for HIV prevention among the defence force was not conditional on a joint programme, but the donor organization did express its full support for the joint programme arrangement and its benefits. Donor support for joint programmes has tended to come through non-core resources. The available fund management options allow donors to contribute to joint programmes using modalities that meet their own requirements.

17. Joint programmes are emerging as a useful tool with which to address complex development issues, such as HIV/AIDS, that require a multi-sectoral response and capacities across a range of United Nations organizations. There are a number of conditions which potentially facilitate joint programmes addressing HIV/AIDS, including its prioritization as a programme area in many United Nations organizations; institutional support amongst the co-sponsoring organizations of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) to promote a joint programming approach at the country level; a commitment to implement the Global Task Team (GTT) recommendations to streamline the United Nations country-level response to HIV/AIDS; senior professional coordination staff helping UNCTs to

work together on HIV/AIDS; institutional and international support for the 'three ones' principle of one national coordinating authority, one national HIV/AIDS framework for action, and one country-level monitoring and evaluation system; a clear division of labour between co-sponsoring organizations; and the existence of United Nations theme groups on HIV/AIDS at the country level.

18. Some of these conditions are also found in the emerging integrated responses of the United Nations system to assist in achieving MDGs at the country level, and in emergency situations. A joint programme recently agreed in Uganda as part of the emergency response in the north of the country confirms that these conditions support joint programmes: through the Consolidated Appeals Process a common analysis had been undertaken, all partners were keen to develop a joint programme and there was a clear division of labour among United Nations partners based on comparative advantage. Once funding became available, the documentation and agreements for the programme were developed and agreed relatively quickly.

19. The instruments developed for joint programmes have also been used effectively in the context of trust funds, including the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, and in humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding and post-crisis transition situations. The Common Humanitarian Fund for Sudan and the proposed fund for the Democratic Republic of Congo will be using joint programme funding instruments, and it is expected that other new trust funds will also use them. Discussions between United Nations organizations and the World Bank on the use of the pass-through fund management mechanism for financing joint needs assessments is currently under way; they are expected to lead to its use in future assessments where a United Nations organization is the administrative agent.

B. Challenges

20. Despite these positive impacts, our experience also suggests that we are not always using joint programmes most effectively. For example:

(a) *Joint programmes formulated before 2005 frequently did not address UNDAF outputs.* The CCA/UNDAF planning stages and the joint strategy meetings are expected to identify opportunities for collective United Nations programmatic responses through joint programmes. Such programmes are expected to be strategic in nature, as is implicit in the guidance note. While joint programmes have originated from diverse national programmatic needs, the use of joint programmes to achieve UNDAF outputs is rare. This has significant implications: such joint programmes may not be focused on national priorities or be linked to appropriate capacity development interventions (which usually require complex working relationships, longer timeframes and sustained efforts in planning, formulation and management). Such initiatives are likely to be addressed in single organization programmes rather than in joint programmes, despite the intention that the latter approach be used in such circumstances. Joint programmes which do not originate in the CCA/UNDAF process are also less likely to include participation by the non-resident or specialized organizations.

(b) *A reduction in the level of collaboration once the UNDAF has been completed also reduces the emergence of joint programmes from the CCA/UNDAF process.* The CCA/UNDAF process requires strengthening on this point, and the proposals to improve the United Nations common country programming process will go a long way towards ensuring that organizations maintain collective action beyond the

UNDAF as they move to operationalize programmes. This will promote the formulation of joint programmes that are clearly linked to national priorities and will reflect the strategic potential of such programmes. The harmonization of country programmes amongst the Executive Committee organizations represents a significant improvement in the effectiveness of joint programmes, and evidence is beginning to emerge that the next generation of joint programmes is being formulated based on the UNDAF. In Viet Nam, for example, the UNCT has identified opportunities for joint programmes in the new UNDAF focusing on capacity strengthening to achieve the MDGs; the United Nations strategic response to HIV/AIDS in Viet Nam; and migration issues. In Bosnia and Herzegovina nine areas have been identified in which to develop joint programmes (gender; adolescent health; youth policy; mine action; MDG monitoring; local governance; census; transitional justice; and anti-trafficking), bringing together the operational programmes of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the High Commissioner for Refugees, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF in support of UNDAF implementation. Joint programmes are also emerging among UNCTs in countries that are not implementing the harmonized programme cycle. Argentina, which is not preparing an UNDAF, has developed a common vision within the United Nations system for joint programmes in the areas of gender, the Global Compact, HIV/AIDS, and achieving the MDGs.

(c) *Current joint programmes may not always merit the transaction costs for the United Nations in developing such a programme.* The term 'joint programmes' is used flexibly to describe a wide variety of joint work by UNCTs, forming a continuum from information sharing to joint activities to joint programmes. UNCTs work together through a range of mechanisms, not all of which lead to a 'formal' joint programme. The limited distinction in the guidance note has contributed to the application of formal joint programme instruments when the short duration and small size of some programmes may have merited a less taxing approach. The possibility of a joint programme should not inhibit other types of collaboration, but efforts to prepare a formal joint programme should be consistent with programme scale. It is likely that if the instruments set out in the guidance note had to be applied to all collaborative work, there would be limited interest among United Nations organizations because of the associated transaction costs.

(d) *Limited use of joint programmes in the broader national programmatic context.* The guidance note says little about the value of joint programmes in the context of other national strategic approaches, including sector-wide approaches (SWAps)[3] and poverty reduction strategies. Joint programmes share many objectives with SWAps, such as reducing transaction costs and enhancing coordination, effectiveness and efficiency in supporting national goals. While joint programmes may not be appropriate in all cases, they can be a useful way to develop a collective view of the role of the United Nations in a SWAp; to enhance policy support; to ensure a clear division of labour amongst United Nations organizations; and to ensure coherence in the United Nations contribution of resources such as technical assistance and funding. We do not monitor the specific correspondence between joint programmes and SWAps, but there is little evidence of United Nations organizations using joint programmes to harmonise their participation in SWAps.

[3] In countries where SWAPs exist, the guidance note encourages United Nations organizations to participate in the SWAPs, where appropriate. In such cases, participating organizations should play a full role in policy and programme development, programme implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

Current joint programmes demonstrate traditional project characteristics, coordinated through a common work plan and budget. In that sense, joint programmes suffer from the dilemma faced by the United Nations generally: where should the balance lie between policy dialogue and project-based support to service delivery? It seems that, so far, joint programmes have been used in the main for the latter purpose. Again, though, there are some signs of change, possibly as a result of wider changes in the aid environment. In Rwanda, through the UNDG plan of action for the implementation of the Paris Declaration, United Nations organizations participate in aid coordination forums, such as the education SWAp, with a view to formulating a joint response.

(e) *The focus of the guidance note has led to the perception that joint programming promotes United Nations-centred programmes rather than partnerships with others.* The guidance note was necessary to establish the relationships between the various operational systems of United Nations organizations. It has proved to be helpful in setting out a series of instruments establishing the relationship between partners in joint programmes, particularly among United Nations organizations and between United Nations organizations and donors. However, an emphasis on internal collaboration can reduce collaboration with other partners. Joint programmes are perceived to be a 'United Nations-centric' approach rather than a modality that will help the United Nations build stronger partnerships with others. The case studies suggest that joint programmes are sometimes seen as ends in themselves rather than as the means to make a more effective contribution to national development goals – which should be the ultimate focus of United Nations support.

(f) *Bilateral donors have limited knowledge of the joint programme fund management options.* This may limit the application of such programmes at the country level. Additionally, some donors have expressed reservations about using the standardised instruments developed for joint programmes: in some cases this is because of concern that they do not meet individual donor requirements; in other cases donors have expressed the desire for organizations to be accountable for the delivery of programme results which are beyond the direct control of the organizations or other United Nations partners. This may reflect historical differences among the organizations in programme approaches. The increasing reliance on non-core resources to fund programme activities tends to create competition among United Nations organizations at the country level as they seek resources – which may run counter to joint programmes. Standard progress report formats have been developed by an inter-organizational working group and should be used to report to donors on joint programmes, but their application has not been consistent across organizations, and some donors seek additional information over and above what is in the standard progress report.

(g) *Monitoring and evaluation of programme impact needs to be improved.* The case studies have indicated that limitations in monitoring and evaluation of single-organization programmes are likewise common for joint programmes, with insufficient attention paid to developing indicators, measuring baselines and establishing adequate monitoring systems. Given the involvement of a wider group of stakeholders in joint programmes, there is an increased need to address monitoring at the planning stages, identifying responsibilities among partners in joint monitoring, including joint site visits, and providing feedback to all partners. Joint programmes also need to use standard approaches for measuring progress

towards the MDGs rather than developing organization-specific indicators. Monitoring of joint programmes should be included in the standard progress report produced by each organization at the country level and should be linked to the annual review process for the UNDAF. Evidence from the case studies points to the need for specific budget provision for monitoring.

V. Current status of implementation of joint programmes

A. Implementation experience

21. Despite the limitations noted above, joint programming provides particular opportunities for identification of appropriate joint programmes; therefore, its roll-out should lead to increasing numbers of joint programmes. The first five countries commenced their harmonized cycles with new country programmes in 2004, extending to sixteen countries in 2005 and 19 in 2006. The CCA/UNDAF process commences one year before the presentation to Executive Boards of draft CPDs, in a harmonized cycle. The current schedule envisages completion of roll-out in all countries by 2008, with the largest block of countries (37) presenting draft CPDs in 2008 and 33 in 2007.

B. Trends

22. The objective of establishing three fund management options and providing consistent guidance to implement joint programmes is to encourage United Nations organizations at the country level to develop integrated, coherent responses to support the achievement of national development results, instead of making separate organization-by-organization contributions. The increase in the number of joint programmes since the guidance note was introduced indicates that this objective is being attained.

23. Although there are a few examples, such as Kenya and Ukraine, where the UNCTs adopted a specific strategy to develop joint programmes, most countries started with just one joint programme. The findings of the case studies suggest that, despite initially high internal transaction costs, the formulation of the first joint programme provided a substantial learning opportunity, and UNCTs are willing to formulate additional joint programmes, with some expected reductions in internal transaction costs. It also appears that UNCTs made use of non-core resources for these joint programmes; in some cases, particularly emergency or transition resources, which were abundant.

24. These patterns indicate that, to date, the number of joint programmes and the proportion of resources (particularly core resources) going into joint programmes, compared to single-organization programmes, is low. If the proposed improvements to the United Nations common country programming process are implemented as envisaged, joint programmes will become a much more likely programme approach from 2008 onwards. As the number of joint programmes rises, and as joint programmes address more strategic UNDAF results, we expect to see a rise in the number of joint programmes as a proportion of all programme activity, as well as in the proportion of all programme resources in joint programmes.

25. Individually and collectively, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF have been partners in 303 joint programmes in recent years. One hundred and fourteen of these

commenced before the guidance note was issued, so the analysis below will focus on programmes that commenced in 2004 and 2005. As expected, there was an increase in the number of new programmes between 2004 and 2005 – from 73 programmes to 116.

26. In terms of regional trends[4], although most of the African countries will not be commencing a harmonized cycle until 2006 or 2007, the highest proportion of joint programmes are to be found in that region (approximately one third of all new joint programmes commenced in 2004 or 2005). This is assumed to be partly the impact of the broader aid environment, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

27. There has also been an increase in the number of joint programmes in regions and countries where CCA/UNDAF processes are undertaken. This effect can be seen in the numbers of joint programmes in the countries in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, Africa, Latin America, and Asia and the Pacific that underwent CCA/UNDAF processes in 2004 or 2005. Most of the Middle East/North Africa/Arab States will commence CCA/UNDAF processes in 2006, so no such increase has been in evidence there as yet.

28. The most common thematic area for joint programme activities has been HIV/AIDS, which is the focus for almost one-fifth of all joint programmes. Reducing child mortality, poverty related statistics and research, and gender issues also feature prominently. The approach developed in the area of HIV/AIDS can provide the momentum to strengthen other joint programme initiatives – for example, ensuring that we pursue an integrated approach to achieving the MDGs, which are multi-sectoral in nature.

C. Options for managing funds

29. Since the introduction of the guidance note, the parallel fund management option has remained the most commonly used. The second most common fund management option was pooled funding. Although the pass-through fund management option is the least commonly used, programmes that use it have the highest median programme budgets. The pass-through option is intended primarily to reduce transaction costs for donors, but programmatically it is similar to parallel funding.

30. Differing cost recovery rates and methods of calculation among organizations cause confusion among partner governments and donors. Additionally, using pooled funding can lead to high recovery rates through 'double cost recovery' if organizations use non-core resources (to which they have already applied cost recovery): when funds are transferred to the managing agent an additional cost recovery is sometimes levied. This is not always the case, depending upon the cost-recovery policies of the individual organization.

31. Work is being undertaken by an inter-organizational group to ensure greater consistency in cost recovery policies for joint programmes. While this may resolve an immediate problem facing joint programmes, in general the development of special measures applying to joint programmes to resolve business process issues will be a short-term solution only. These issues need to be resolved at the financial systems level.

[4] Countries have been categorized according to the five regions currently noted on the UNDG website, since the three organizations do not use the same definition of regions.

32. There is evidence that competing resource mobilization requirements, different cost recovery rates and strategies, and varied financial management processes and systems complicate joint programme logistics and may delay transferring funds, deter partner buy-in, and cause confusion among partner governments and other stakeholders.

33. The focus of the guidance note on establishing relationships between United Nations organizations was in the main an outcome of the limited harmonization of their respective reporting, accounting and financial management systems. Despite the instruments developed, continued differences in these systems continue to hamper the desire to use all the fund management options, particularly pooled funding, though they are not in themselves an obstacle to joint programmes that use parallel funding management options. The latter, of course, are unlikely to reduce funding-related transaction costs for either the Government or the United Nations, although other transaction costs may be reduced.

D. Partnerships

34. Our key partners in joint programmes are governments. National NGOs and civil society organizations also feature as partners, though we have not yet undertaken a full analysis of partnerships beyond the United Nations organizations. An analysis undertaken at the end of 2005 of United Nations system participation in joint programmes shows that UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF have the highest participation rates in such programmes. The World Health Organization (WHO), UNAIDS and WFP are also frequent partners. This focus of United Nations partnerships in joint programmes among the Executive Committee organizations, WHO and UNAIDS is likely a result of the common country programming process of the Executive Committee organizations and the level of country presence among the six organizations. Many other specialized organizations are partners in joint programmes, including the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the World Bank, though in a smaller number of programmes.

35. Partnerships are likely to evolve in new ways. With increasing resources available outside the United Nations system, greater results can be achieved through partnerships and leveraging even if funds do not pass through the organizations.

VI. Moving forward

36. We have noted that we are beginning to see some benefits of joint programmes, including reduced duplication of activities; reduced transaction costs for programme country governments and donors; and more effective United Nations support at the country level to address complex development problems. We have remained focussed on our mandates while pursuing joint programmes. The joint programme fund management options provide adequate safeguards for accounting and reporting by using the same systems as single-organization programmes. We are gaining an understanding of the weaknesses in current joint programmes, including limited links to the CCA/UNDAF process and use of joint programmes at less strategic levels than might be most beneficial. We also note that where the joint programming process is supported by the operational tools of the guidance note we

can begin to address some of the programming challenges. There are more general operational issues which need to be addressed at the organizational level. To ensure that we have a full understanding of strengths and weaknesses, a full evaluation of joint programming and joint programmes should be undertaken once there is sufficient experience from which to draw meaningful results.

37. The evidence indicates that, within the relatively short time in which they have been in operation, the guidance note and the CCA/UNDAF process together have been effective in addressing some of the challenges faced in the early years of promoting joint programmes. Further sustained efforts are necessary to enable them to meet their full potential to provide a coherent, effective and efficient United Nations response to support countries in addressing national priorities and attaining the MDGs.

38. We need to build on the benefits realized so far from joint programmes, including increased coherence, reduced duplication and reduced transaction costs, through greater use of joint programmes. Equally, now that we have established appropriate institutional support to joint programmes through the guidance note, joint programming and the common country programming process, we should ensure that these are applied.

39. The proposed improvements in the United Nations country programming process are expected to enhance the ability of UNCTs to address complex national development priorities, including capacity development, budget support, and sector-wide and programme-based approaches. Joint programmes will be an integral part of this. A continuous flow from planning to programming in the common county programming process should promote the participation of the full capacity of the United Nations system, including non-resident and specialized United Nations organizations, in joint programmes.

Annex 1. Implementation of joint programmes by UNDP

40. UNDP participation in joint programmes continues to increase, complementing the resident coordination responsibilities of the organization. UNDP country offices have emphasized active support to, and collaboration with, the resident coordination system in joint programming and joint programmes. The *number of countries* reporting in the UNDP balanced scorecard database of UNDP participation in joint programmes has increased by more than 50 per cent, from 60 in 2004 to 96 in 2005; the *number of joint programmes reported in the balanced scorecard database* more than doubled in the same period. Globally, 204 joint programmes in which UNDP participated conformed with the definition of joint programmes in the guidance note. This makes UNDP a participant in two-thirds of the 303 joint programmes reported by the three Executive Committee organizations. UNDP was a partner in nearly 90 joint programmes initiated in 2005. While there has been a considerable improvement in reporting, data quality needs to be improved.

41. Over three-quarters of the joint programmes in which UNDP participated directly addressed MDGs. Of these, nearly 80% were focused on poverty, gender, HIV/AIDS and promoting development of capacities to achieve the MDGs. Joint programmes not directly connected with an MDG goal address other areas of the Millennium Declaration, such as humanitarian assistance, human rights and peacebuilding. UNDP participates in almost all joint programmes addressing governance issues. UNDP has retained its focused on its mandate in participating in the joint programmes.

42. Reported allocation of UNDP resources to joint programmes increased from nearly $9 million in 2004 to $15 million in 2005. The financial data indicate that UNDP deploys 75 per cent of its joint programming funds catalytically: combined with the pass-through fund management option to raise resources from donors for joint programmes among United Nations organizations; and to promote pooled arrangements, reducing transaction costs to partners. The UNDP contribution to the 204 projects exceeded $34 million, of which 36 per cent related to the pass-through funding modality; 39 per cent to pooled funding, and 19 per cent to parallel funding, with a further 6 per cent combining of the funding modalities. To date, the use of non-core resources has kept UNDP resources in joint programmes low. However, as the number of joint programmes increases, and as they increasingly address strategic UNDAF results, the proportion of UNDP resources in joint programmes will rise.

43. The new aid modalities, including SWAps, open up opportunities for UNDP and the resident coordinator system to play a greater role in delivering integrated, coordinated United Nations responses and support to governments. The UNDP-UNCT engagement in providing capacity development support to governments to lead in the SWAp process, and to ensure resource alignment with sectoral priorities within national development strategies, is important for ensuring MDG-based PRS outcomes. For example, in Rwanda, UNDP was able to ensure greater United Nations participation in the education SWAp by leveraging its participation in the overall harmonization debate. As the aid environment evolves and implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness takes hold, UNDP will be able to identify additional opportunities for United Nations system support to national development processes. Joint programmes could further enhance the United Nations response in such situations.

Annex 2. Implementation of joint programmes by UNFPA

44. UNFPA is participating in nearly 50 per cent of the joint programmes[5] that were verified for this review. UNFPA participation in joint programmes where starting dates are available has grown from 25 prior to January 2004 to 33 in 2004 and 57 in 2005. The areas of concentration of joint programmes are closely linked to UNFPA mandates, notably in HIV/AIDS (25 per cent), reproductive health (18 per cent), youth (15 per cent) and data collection (13 per cent). The joint programming modality provides more opportunities for UNFPA to ensure that its mandates are reflected into macro-level plans and strategies. Through joint programming, UNFPA is able to provide technical assistance in areas such as MDG, PRS and national budget monitoring, especially with regard to maternal health. Without that modality, UNFPA might have been over-extended, or might have been unable to deliver these inputs.

45. UNFPA, unlike UNDP and UNICEF, does not have a country-level fiduciary mechanism and relies on UNDP to provide it. Through the review of the joint programmes, in pooled and pass-through funding modalities[6], UNFPA retains lead-agency status as the managing or administrative agency in 34 per cent of the joint programmes. These are in areas where UNFPA has a comparative advantage within the United Nations system, namely, HIV/AIDS prevention; reproductive health; youth; data collection; and gender, including gender-based violence. The largest numbers of joint programmes are concerned with HIV/AIDS.

46. Of the 147 joint programmes identified, there is little numerical difference between geographical regions: Africa, 48; Arab States, Europe and Central Asia, 41; Asia and the Pacific, 31; and Latin America and the Caribbean, 30. However, when the data is divided into sub-regions, as in the case of the Arab States, Eastern Europe and the Central Asia region, the positive effect of the common country programming process[7] becomes clear. The Arab States, where the roll-out will start in 2006, have only 10 joint programmes, whereas the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region has 31. Eleven of the 21 Eastern Europe and Central Asia region countries rolled out the common country programming process in 2005, with four more planning to do so in 2006.

47. UNFPA has asked country offices to report specifically on joint programmes only starting with the 2005 annual reports. UNFPA has no plans to create its own database for joint programmes at present, but would like to see the DGO website improved.

48. UNFPA wishes to explore additional joint programming opportunities through the common country programming process so as to maximize programme delivery. UNFPA is committed to promoting joint assessments for development assistance, including in emergency situations. UNFPA seeks to make development assistance more efficient and effective, and to reduce transaction costs to host countries.

---

[5] Total number of verified joint programmes in which at least one of UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF is participating

[6] There is no managing or administrative agent in parallel joint programmes.

[7] For the status and plan for roll-out countries, see.
http://unctdatabase.undg.org/index.cfm?module=JointProgramme&CountryID